

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy

General Action Team

9.24.20 ♦ 12-1:30 pm

Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman and Xavi Vallejo, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Rep Gail Armstrong
- Andrew Baker, Health Action NM
- Kino Benally, assistant to Delegate Crotty
- Jane Braithwaite, volunteer with Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Ellen Buelow, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Molly Callaghan with Rep. Haaland
- Tim Davis, NM Center on Law & Poverty
- Yvonne Diaz, La Semilla Food Center, farmer
- Joy Dinero, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tyler Eshelman, New Mexico Coalition to Enhance Working Lands (NMCEWL)
- Bruce Hinrich, NMSU Extension
- Sherry Hooper, The Food Depot
- Allison Griffin, Cullari Group
- Keegan King, NM Indian Affairs Dept.
- Fergus Whitney, Village of Los Ranchos
- Roy Montibon, The Montibon Company
- Jonas Moya, NM Cattle Growers Association
- Andrea Nash, Roadrunner Food Bank
- Carlos Navarro, Interfaith Hunger Coalition
- Tsiporah Nephesh, NM Thrives
- Jason New, NMDA
- Karen Plawecki, NMSU Extension
- Victoria Quevedo, La Semilla Food Center
- Valerie Rangel, The New Mexico Foundation
- Erika Robers, New Mexico First
- Anna Rondon, NM Social Justice & Equity Institute
- Pam Roy, NM Farm to Table and NM Food & Ag Policy Council
- Stephanie Rogus, NMSU
- Emily Wildau, NM Voices for Children
- Brent Van Dyke, NM Association of Conservation Districts

I. Welcome and check-in - What's giving you hope or concern about this work?

- Jane works with Rep. Stansbury. She said that the Representative is very appreciative of everyone's input.
- Rep. Armstrong: District 49, Catron, Valencia and Socorro Counties – frontier and rural NM.
- Valerie Rangel, New Mexico Foundation. Fiscal sponsorship and outreach coordinator. Also environmental consultant and community/regional planner
- Fergus Whitney, ag program manager for Village of Los Ranchos launched Agri Future report in August 2020 with grant from Thornburg and NMSU. Looking at phase 2, "Changing our Agri Future." Will be focusing on a handful of important issues. Hoping to have first meeting at end of October. **They also hope to link in with NM First to see where there is complementary crossover.** He said to reach out to him for hard copies of the [report](#).
- Carlos said their world food day video project will be posted on October 16. Will be using one of the Food Central kitchen videos they did with Tiwa Kitchen.
- Sherry Hooper, Executive Director, Food Depot and NM Association of Food Banks
- Bruce Hinrichs, Cooperative Extension Service, NMSU.

- Karen Plawecki, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service, Nutritionist.
- Stephanie Rogus noted that three briefs came out of their survey. She said publishing was a long process and that **she would share them as soon as they were published**. One finding was that food insecurity didn't increase during the pandemic, but food insecurity is at 30%. Another finding was that people have changed their food shopping habits and are purchasing more canned food. People are more interested in food assistance programs now. Stephanie sits on the board of the NM Academy of Dietetics.
- Ellen is a former teacher. She said she was concerned about leaving children out. Food is extremely important for kids voices. She was happy to see a broad coalition in this group.
- Allison Griffin, malnutrition and policy are her areas. September is malnutrition awareness month. The first full week in October is Malnutrition Awareness Week. On Monday, she will be sharing with the group communication documents and tools to share with their networks.
- Yvonne Diaz is a farmer in Dona Ana co. and with La Semilla Food Center she's a food educator. She said she was new to the policy process and was appreciative for the opportunity to learn about the impact of policy on daily life. She is a small farm operator and feels she would not represent all statewide farmers. "It would be great to get more farmers from across the state involved." She said she was interested in feeding her community and that she was here to learn and was very appreciated of everyone's work.
- Tyler wrote in the chat: I will not be able to unmute myself (working from my barn today and it's particularly noisy at the moment). Tyler Eshleman, Coordinator for the New Mexico Coalition to Enhance Working Lands (NMCEWL). We work primarily with agricultural support organizations and conservation organizations, but also do direct work with landowners, managers, and producers. We do a lot of restorative/transformational justice in ag and land communities across the state. Very excited to stay engaged with each of you on our joint and collaborative interests. coordinator@nmcewl.org
- Tsiporah said that what gives her hope is the diverse voices and perspective, what gives her pause was a hesitancy and reticence regarding regenerative agriculture. NM and the planet's future depend on it. Lilly noted that in NM, to name it, name our history and not being afraid to working on what is importance.
- Andrea said via the chat: "Cannot get microphone to turn on for some reason - who knows why? #MoreAnnoying2020Things -- I'm Andrea Nash, Chief Development Officer at Roadrunner Food Bank - I'm just so aware of the diverse voices on the call and REAL passion coming from everyone - gives a lot of hope for sure that they are so many caring people."
- Emily from NM Voices for Children said what gives her hope is the way we are approaching hunger in the state with ag systems, safer access, immediate needs for food and family economics. "I'm having a blast working with you guys." They are doing the 2nd Kids count Conference. Link to 2nd virtual Kids Count Conference session info & registration: <https://www.nmvoices.org/kcc>.



- Joy said she works at the Interfaith Hunger Coalition. Inspired to learn from the different voices around the state. Mother of a kindergartener and infant in Albuquerque's South Valley. Excited to learn about the issue and how she can contribute.
- Andrew Baker is with Health Action NM - makes sure we have environmental and health justice in NM. One of the joys is seeing how we are able to come together. Hopefully, it will carry over into the new normal after the pandemic. It's frustrating to see we are still debating some of the basic issues.
- Pam Roy, Farm to Table and the NM Food and Ag Policy Council. Inspiration you give to all of us with all the stories you tell. "I learn a lot every time I'm here."
- Roy Montibon, a lifelong entrepreneur and educator, teaching entrepreneurs for social impact at Untied World College in Las Vegas. "We don't have a lot of people from my region on these calls." Very excited to be a part of this process. He said he was starting to work with some of those on the call on side projects. Arts and culture and agriculture are his areas of interest. "Something that gives me hope with these conversations – it's thrilling to see people from all over the state and all walks of life on these calls."
- Victoria La Semilla Food Center in Anthony, Food Policy and Resource Coordinator. Comme from community centered approach, know that the solutions for hunger are in the community and should be led by community. Try to lift that up with community co-education and learning circles. Maintaining 31 gardens across 3-4 schools districts during the pandemic so the schools have a garden when they return, have a community farm to get food into schools.
- Jason New, NMDA Marketing & Development director, Las Cruces. Here to listen and learn, provide input and report back to Sec. Jeff Witte. Ag, food security, nutrition, lessons learned from pandemic. "It's really cool to sit here at these meetings and learn from all the stakeholders at the meeting and their expertise."
- Molly Callaghan, field representative for Rep. Deb Haaland – it helps us understand from a federal perspective how to help. Something that came up recently that the USDA has designated Bernalillo and Tarrant counties a state of emergency for drought. Reach out through the local FSA office. Spread the word that more emergency funds are available for farmers and ranchers during the drought. Molly Callaghan with Congresswoman Deb Haaland, molly.callaghan@mail.house.gov The USDA shared this link with us:
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/index>
- Kino Benally, assistant to Delegate Crotty: I grew up on a farm so it's nice to be around the rural area and see everybody from my childhood farming.
- Anna Rondon, NM Social Justice and Equity institute in McKinley County. "What inspires me to keep coming to these calls is building relationships and meeting amazing people throughout the state." She said she hadn't seen NM First do this. She said she appreciated and commended the staff for bringing everybody together. We are family. "We are going to have a great harvest legislatively." Thank you, everybody on the call.



- Tim Davis, NM Center on Law and Poverty, public benefits issues. P-EBT program is now part of the government funding bill and the senate is expected to pass it. He said he was hopefully it would pass and would keep the group up on the developments. He said it was a program that directly addresses child hunger.
- Jonas Moya, executive director, NM. He said these conversations are happening and hopeful good outcomes will come out of these conversations. There are things coming up on the November ballot we should be aware of regarding constitutional amendments. Keep the power for the people.
- Brent Van Dyke, NM Association of Conservation Districts, gov't affairs director. He hopes the pandemic will quickly end so he can eat in nice restaurants. "On my radar, my day is filled with water and soil issues. Agriculture production is so important to NM." He said he had spoken with Rep. Zamora on a weather station bill. Trying to figure out if we can get more funding upgrade our weather stations to benefit production ag statewide. A church in Lea County has offered over 40,000 meals. He added that if one small church No child should ever go hungry." Trying to find out the cost of putting snowmaking machines in the mountains to offset drought conditions, "because nm agriculture has got to have water and if we don't start thinking outside the box, NM will be in trouble." Brent and his wife have cattle, and are now reducing the amount of alfalfa. They have the largest vineyard in SE NM.
- Randal Major NM Cattle Growers, president of the board.
- Erika Robers, NM First Strategic Civic Engagement and Policy Manger for agricultural resilience.
- Kurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry – NM, Director. "What gives me hope is the sun keeps coming up every day."
- Lilly Irvin-Vitela, President and Executive Director at NMF. Was a hungry kid growing up. She said she was also trained as a community and regional planner and a big believer that the best policy solutions are informed best by the people most impacted and that we are hearing from many. She went on to say that our network/family has grown since it first began a year ago. Working out policy solutions as well as nitty-gritty things on the ground – urgent, emergency, mid-term and long-term work.

II. Food and Farm Bill Update

Lilly gave a highlight on how the food and ag bill is emerging. Rep. Stansbury and Rep. Ferrary as well as other legislators. The work for the 2020 regular session had broad bipartisan support. We challenged ourselves when we came back after the 2020 session and responding to COVID – to not reinvent the wheel. To hold support around good things that were already underway, from investment the state was already making to emergency food system and procurement, to robust system that we have and can build from in Ag Extension. She added that they had also been having conversations for places where there are opportunities for innovations and in alignment with values and needs. Not only policy that will strengthen local ag and food systems but also emergency food distribution and food distribution to those who are most food insecure. Also healthy soil and water and the impact on crops. Deep issues. One piece of legislation will not fix issues that are hundreds of years in the making. Yet we can't use that as an excuse to not move forward and do the best we can do by each other. By taking this more comprehensive look,



understanding how each organization and individual's work is situated in a broader context we can work in creative places. There are 4 major sections in the bill:

1. Agricultural supports, ways we can integrate local food systems, including: Ag production, distribution, value chain, ag and food infrastructure, healthy soil, meat processing, cold storage and transportation, ag education, extension, great work that the NM Food and Ag Policy Council does to really make sure that when there are opportunities and there are state dollars, invest in our food systems and putting money back into our economy, SNAP Double up Food program led by the NM Farmers Marketing Association
2. Emergency food networks and programs, ongoing programs across the lifespan. Wherever possible maintain the gains in flexibility we earned during the pandemic so it works for families and communities. Food rescue programs.
3. Cutting red tape for community supports such as wage theft enforcement, employment, administration of SNAP benefit. Reducing barriers to folks so they can become more able to count on where there food is coming from
4. Appropriations. It's important to have less piecemeal funding for food and ag, have more significant appropriations especially as we're trying to get through the pandemic in a way that enforces the highest needs and also builds on the strengths in our assets.

Lilly added that there is a commitment to reading through and making things understood and were open to suggestions if anyone had ideas, suggestions, resources, etc. They are trying to make sure they are doing their part to condense information that is really actionable.

- Rep. Armstrong asked if the idea was to create one bill that implements all of this? Lilly replied yes. It is similar to the omnibus style bill of the 2020 regular session. This bill is more comprehensive, a response to the needs that have been playing out during the pandemic.
- Rep. Armstrong wanted to know if the funds were to be sourced from one place. Lilly said yes, the intention was to seek something that was less about one particular entity and more about a comprehensive approach. She added that as a matter of strategy and transparency, they had already approached department secretaries to see if there was room in their budgets – their response was that funds would need to be attained elsewhere.
 - Rep. Armstrong said the legislative finance committee would be meeting next week. She said she encouraged the group to break up the bill into 3-4 smaller bills. "It's going to be really hard to evaluate every aspect of it. Some of it may be a poison pill to the bill as a whole. The picture is so large it gets really overwhelming." She is a rancher and farmer and sits on the Roadrunner Food Bank board. She added that regarding unemployment for farm worker and wages, one of the problems was that healthy soil may be year-round, but harvesting is time-sensitive. Food stands and farmers' markets hire temporary workers who claim unemployment. That hurts the employer through unemployment tax.



- Rep. Armstrong added that agriculture teachers in general have been pushed out of the school system. Home economics used to teach how to feed a family; including nutrition and how to balance a budget. “We don’t give things time.” Home economics and FFA, county extension agents – all of this still happens in rural NM. She went on to say that the Education Committee was going on and Rep. Dow was on that committee. Rep. Armstrong said she appreciated everyone’s hard work. “Doing away with red tape is always better in my book.” She invited those on the call to contact her at gail@gailfornewmexico.com.
- Lilly noted that starting at 9:30 am the following day there would be an opportunity for a presentation to the Health and Human Services Committee, on which sit Representatives Armstrong, Ferrary and others. Lilly sent out an email about who would be presenting. She invited those on the call to listen in and/or make a public comment. Rep. Armstrong noted that the presentation would take place first and comments would be heard after that.
- Lilly said that at New Mexico First, work continues around agricultural resilience as well as in the health policy space. NM First had just wrapped up its Health: Body, Mind & Spirit Town Hall. One of the groups was focused on food insecurity and healthy local food systems. The work is posted on the [NM First website](#) and will be shared with the community.
- Lilly asked if anyone had questions about the presentation or next steps around the legislative piece.
 - Roy asked how the priorities document was being edited, and to whom to send thoughts/ideas. Lilly replied that people should respond to the [Google doc](#). She asked that people not delete anything, but they could add. “Please share reference, reports, etc.” Email Lilly (lilly@nmfirst.org) and Rep. Stansbury (melaniestansbury@yahoo.com) with questions and resources, and make sure to put “**Food and Farm Bill**” in the subject line.

III. Is there anything that you would like support around or invite other folks to participate in with you?

- Lilly noted that it was Hunger Action Month and asked if there was anything people wanted to highlight for folks that they could do for Hunger Action Month. Sherry replied that **calls to your congressional delegation about supporting low income folks in NM with additional benefits to help them through the pandemic would be great.** Regarding the Food and Farm Bill, it’s important that everyone have input into that.
 - Andrea put in the chat: “Things one can do during Hunger Action Month: <https://www.rffb.org/hunger-action-month/>”
- Regarding educational and networking opportunities, Lilly acknowledged the good work everyone was doing. “Please don’t let one another’s or our own busyness to get in the way of connecting the dots. If you share with any of our team the good work you are doing addressing food and hunger and supporting agriculture, NM First will share the announcements with its 14,000 member network.”
- Valerie noted that if there were any organizations providing direct support such as food, water or services to their regions, to direct applications to The New Mexico Foundation’s Vecino Fund. It could cover firewood, hay,



water trucks, food. She added that the grant cycle would be opening in a couple weeks. If there is an urgent matter that needs to be funded, contact the foundation. Lilly added that the NM Foundation's process is user friendly. If folks have already applied (whether they were funded or the application was denied), the foundation is willing to support past awardees and also entertain seeing applications come through again. Funds could be used for operational support as well as emergency food and water needs.

- Lilly noted that in March and April we sent communication to legislators with a customized resource and referral list. The ask was to support local food systems, local agriculture and the emergency food system. She asked everyone on the call to make sure they are on the SHARE New Mexico [online resource directory](#).

